﻿﻿Guide Dog News

**2023, Issue 2**

**COVER**

Photo: Cheri Owen and guide dog, Martinez

**Greetings from the CEO**

Greetings,

Happy spring! After a wet winter on our California and Oregon campuses, it’s nice to have some sunshine again. Spring is a time of new beginnings — something we experience every day at Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB). Puppies are born, guide dog teams are trained, K9 Buddies provide companionship to clients of all ages, and Orientation and Mobility Immersion clients gain new skills to live safe, independent lives.

None of this vital work would be possible without the support of our entire GDB community. A key component of this support begins with a financial investment from philanthropic supporters like the Hind Foundation and Travers Family Foundation. Their significant contributions have helped to fund our Apprentice Training Program (pages 4-5) and Veterinary Care Program (pages 6-7), and we are so excited for these programs to grow and thrive thanks in large part to their support.

This philanthropic investment — and the ongoing support of our donors, volunteers, and staff — make a profound difference in both the lives of our clients and the dogs we breed and train to partner with them. Since we are 100% privately funded and receive no government support, we count on people like you to ensure that:

* GDB can provide our clients with a lifetime of care and support so they can continue to live more abundant, inclusive lives.
* No client pays for the cost of training, travel, housing, food, or their guide dog or K9 Buddy.
* GDB’s dogs are lovingly bred, trained, and cared for throughout their entire lives, including financial support to our clients for veterinary care, as needed.
* GDB’s services won’t stop when our guide dog clients go home with a dog — we provide the most comprehensive follow-up care of any guide dog school to ensure that our teams are successful and can work safely together for as long as possible.

Thank you for all you do. Together, we are unstoppable!

With gratitude,

Christine Benninger

President and CEO

**Program Spotlight: Training More Instructors to Serve More Clients**

Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) is known throughout the world for our positive reinforcement-based Guide Dog Training Program that matches hundreds of dogs with clients every year. Fueling the program’s success is GDB’s Apprentice Training Program that teaches individuals to become qualified Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMIs). During the three-year paid apprenticeship, apprentices undergo rigorous on-the-job training with mentor instructors and comprehensive academics in the core areas of guide dog training, client assessment, client training, and field support.

Apprentice Program Manager Amy Gunn says GDB developed the apprenticeship to ensure that GDB always has a pool of qualified instructors. “There are no trade schools, colleges, or universities that fully prepare individuals for the role, so we train and develop our own instructors,” she says. “Training dogs to become guides is an extremely specialized, complex skill, and teaching clients who are blind or visually impaired how to partner with a guide dog requires an extensive, unique skillset.” Instructors who complete the apprenticeship are among some of the best trained Guide Dog Mobility Instructors in the world.

Currently, a record 28 apprentices are in the program, with many expected to become qualified GDMIs by 2024. The program recently received a substantial philanthropic investment from the Hind Foundation to help ensure that GDB is fully staffed to support our goal of training 300+ guide dog teams a year. GDB currently supports approximately 2,000 guide dog teams throughout North America and has trained more than 16,000 teams in the past 80+ years.

To round out their skillset and help meet more clients where they are, several of our GDMIs have also become certified in Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training. Rehabilitation Services Director Marc Gillard says GDB’s free O&M Immersion Program helps clients who are blind or visually impaired gain the skills to safely travel with a cane or a canine. “Unfortunately, 40 percent of the people who apply for a guide dog lack these critical skills to qualify for our guide dog training program,” says Marc. “Having more dually-qualified instructors on staff can help support GDB’s O&M Immersion Program, enhance applicant assessment, and help support established teams with more complex O&M needs in the field.”

To encourage more staff to become dually qualified, GDB recently launched an Educational Assistance Program for select guide dog mobility instructors throughout GDB to help cover tuition costs at an accredited university with an O&M program, as well as paid time to pursue the degree (typically a 15 to 24-month process). No other guide dog school in North America offers anything similar.

Marc says while GDMIs are trained to assess an individual applicant’s readiness to train with a guide dog, O&M Specialists are proficient at holistically assessing physical issues and recognizing potential neurological or hearing impairments as well. “A dually-qualified GDMI can assess how these additional characteristics may impact a person’s readiness for a guide dog,” he says. “Most importantly, they can assess and address any O&M skill deficits affecting a client in the training moment. This program helps instructors expand their skillset, broadens GDB’s employee talent pool, and helps us meet more clients’ needs.”

Quote: “Being a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor and O&M Specialist has enabled me to take a more holistic, comprehensive approach to my guide dog training and client services work. The O&M training I received in my master’s program complemented the GDB apprenticeship in a beautiful way, and I feel well-equipped to work with the variety of people and dogs.” -Taelor Michehl , Certified O&M Instructor and Qualified Guide Dog Mobility Instructor (pictured with five guide dogs in training with the Golden Gate Bridge in the background)

Photo: Dually-certified Guide Dog Mobility and Orientation & Mobility Instructors Kelly Chadwick (L) and Amy Gunn. Kelly is GDB's Apprentice Program O&M Instructor and teaches the O&M modules of the apprenticeship. Amy is the Apprentice Program Manager and oversees the program curriculum and apprentice training.

**Giving Back: For the Health of Every Dog**

GDB’s commitment to excellent veterinary care begins with each puppy’s first checkup and continues throughout every working dog’s journey. This dedication to the health and welfare of our dogs resonated with members of the Travers Family Foundation who recently funded a position for a new GDB staff veterinarian. “We believe that every GDB dog deserves to have the best medical care possible,” says Elizabeth Travers. “Funding a new veterinary position to help carry out the organization’s commitment to the health and wellness of its dogs made sense.”

The Travers have also funded the Travers Family Puppy Nursery in the Puppy Center on GDB’s California campus. Daughter Nancy Travers Lucas says GDB’s values align with those of her family. “Our love for dogs and our desire to help empower people who are blind or visually impaired are the reasons we continue to support GDB’s important work.”

Every year, GDB performs thousands of hours of general canine veterinary care as well as specialized and emergency operations to keep our dogs healthy, happy, and active. GDB Medical Director Dr. Kate Kuzminski says caring for GDB’s puppies and dogs on our campuses is a 24/7 operation. “Having another full-time veterinarian helps us continue to provide the best veterinary care as we grow our guide dog and K9 Buddy Programs.” She says once a dog is paired with a client, maintaining the health of each program dog is critical to the overall success of a guide dog or K9 Buddy team. “That’s why we are so committed to the

health and well-being of all our working dogs for their entire lives,” explains Dr. Kate.

GDB client Bruce Gilmour has experienced this commitment firsthand. He has had six guide dogs since 1985 and lives in Vancouver, British Columbia with his wife Wendy, his retired guide dog Marley and his current guide dog Falina. When Marley was still guiding, he developed a growth between his shoulder blades. Bruce contacted GDB for support and advice. “My vet and Dr. Erin Matern at GDB both recommended that the growth be surgically removed. That operation would have been a significant financial hit for me and I’m grateful GDB’s Veterinary Financial Assistance (VFA) fund was there to help.” Bruce praised Dr. Matern for her emotional support and technical expertise. “She was involved in every step of the way, communicating with me and my vet about what treatment she felt was necessary to help Marley,” says Bruce. “Marley gave me the best years of his life. Even though he’s retired from guiding, GDB continues to help pay for Marley’s veterinary needs through the VFA Program. That says a lot about GDB’s commitment to their guide dogs and their clients.”

“GDB has been raising, training, and supporting these special dogs for 80+years,” explains Kate. “We don’t ever want cost to be a barrier to anyone who could benefit from a magical partnership with one of our dogs. With the ongoing support of our community, we look forward to continuing this life-changing work for many years to come.”

Photos:

* GDB Veterinarian Dr. Diana Alvarez
* GDB client Bruce Gilmour with guide dog, Falina, and retried guide dog, Marley

**Your ongoing support changes lives!**

* $50 helps pay for a pup’s initial vaccinations
* $150 goes toward annual wellness checkups
* $300 assists with the cost of a “Puppy Raising Kit” for a volunteer raiser
* $500 helps pay for an ergonomic guide dog harness
* $1000 assists with the cost of urgent care procedures

**Client Profile: Cheri Owen**

For GDB Alumni Board member Cheri Owen, having her guide dog, Martinez, in her life is a slam dunk. “My whole life has changed so much because of Martinez,” she says. “After he came into my life, I gained a new level of confidence. I feel like no matter where we go, we’re a team.”

And Cheri is no stranger to teamwork. She is a U.S. Air Force Gulf War veteran; a former athlete who played collegiate basketball, and was a competitive power lifter. Before her retirement, she had a career as a features writer/editor for a power lifting magazine. These days, Cheri volunteers as a life coach and mentor to student athletes on the women’s basketball team at UC Santa Barbara, where her wife, Jenni Sorkin, is an art history professor. “I’m here to teach the athletes that there’s a whole life waiting for them once they’re done with their college sports career,” she says.

Cheri and Martinez are a steady presence at the practices and games, and Martinez is integral to her work with the team. “Martinez helps me show these young women athletes — and everybody in the Thunderdome — that blindness isn’t something that needs to be isolating. That you can be involved and be a part of the community and be everything that you want to be regardless of being blind or visually impaired.”

Cheri is grateful to GDB’s donors and volunteers. “You really have such a profound impact on people’s lives — it goes beyond what you can even imagine,” she says. “There’s not enough gratitude to go around. If you ever have a doubt if your support matters, it does. It makes a difference. It’s miraculous.”

To see a video featuring Cheri and Martinez, visit GDB’s YouTube channel, guidedogsaregreat.

Photo: Cheri Owen and her guide dog, Martinez, with members of the UCSB womens basketball team.

**Board Profile: Deborah Neff**

GDB Board Member Deborah Neff moved a lot when she was a kid. But she had her family and always had her dog and cat to comfort her while she adjusted to each new town. “I learned early on the importance of the human-animal bond.” That bond sparked her interest in being a long-time supporter and volunteer with GDB. Her family has had career change dogs, and more recently have been volunteer breeder custodians. Deb’s family currently share their lives with retired breeder Josette.

“During her time as a breeder and when we adopted Josette upon her retirement, I became truly aware of how amazing GDB is. Everyone who interacted with her was wonderful, including Josette’s puppy raisers who have become our close friends. The love and care that goes into every GDB puppy and program dog is so evident.”

As a consultant in the life sciences industry, Deborah helps build small biotech startups into global businesses. “I believe my experience working with startup companies will add value to GDB as it grows its revenue to serve more clients and serve them more broadly. “Like a startup, GDB is constantly evolving, changing, and adapting to meet its clients’ needs.”

Deborah says she’s fascinated with GDB’s initiatives that improve the health and well-being of our program dogs and the DNA research that analyzes large data sets of canine genetics, breeding, behavior, and medical traits to improve the success rates of our dogs.” She notes that GDB has made great strides in the last 80 year, adding numerous programs for youth who are blind or visually impaired and an Orientation & Mobility Immersion Program to help clients gain skills to work with a cane or a guide dog. “I’m excited to be a part of all of this expansive work and help raise funds to support it as we grow our mission to serve more clients and to serve them more broadly.”

Photo: Deborah Neff and her mother, Irva, with retired GDB breeder dog, Josette

**In Memoriam: Charles N. Travers**

GDB Philanthropist Charles “Chuck” Travers passed away in April at the age of 87. Chuck loved dogs, believed deeply in our mission, and was committed to the health and welfare of animals. Through the Travers Family Foundation, Chuck and his family funded the Travers Family Puppy Nursery in our Puppy Center and recently funded a new veterinarian position on our California campus. “Chuck, and the entire Travers family, have been such wonderful supporters of our mission as well as dear friends,” says GDB CEO and President, Christine Benninger. “Because of Chuck and his family’s support, GDB has been able to lead the guide dog industry in the care of our puppies and dogs. Chuck truly will be missed!”

**News Bytes**

Crave more GDB news and activities? We’ve got you covered!

* Listen to our Central Bark podcast: guidedogs.com/podcast
* Read heartwarming and inspiring stories on our blog: guidedogs.com/blog
* Read our Tales Unleashed monthly e-newsletter: guidedogs.com/tales-unleashed
* Take a virtual tour of our California and Oregon campuses: guidedogs.com/gdb-campus-tour
* Take a virtual tour of the GDB Puppy Center on our California: guidedogs.com/puppycentertour
* Attend an in-person graduation or take a campus tour: guidedogs.com/tours
* Watch a live graduation live streamed on our YouTube channel: Youtube.com/@gdb\_official/streams
* Visit our GDB store on our California or Oregon campuses or shop online : guidedogs.com/shop

**Donor List**

Thank you to our new and continued supporters January 1-March 31, 2023

Leadership Circle and Friend's Society members

Honoring the generous donors who contribute $5,000+ annually.

Visionaries $1 million+

Travers Family Foundation

Soul Mates $100,000 - $499,999

Anonymous

Subaru of America, Inc.

Heroes $50,000 - $99,999

Anonymous

Grace and Ed Ehrman

Stephanie and Lawrence Flinn, Jr.

Partners $25,000 - $49,999

Anonymous

Don Bloyer

In Honor of Howard Hedinger and Hero

RAWZ Natural Pet Food

Charles Robel

Companions $10,000 - $24,999

Anonymous

Doug and Pat Allen

Ginger and Donald Anderson

Aiko Bevans

Rose Kaufman Butler

Carol A Stuhr Family Foundation

Steven and Debbie Cohen

Sean Doroudian

Rebecca Gaples

George & Margaret Zivelonghi Foundation

Google Inc.

Barbara Kurtzer

Dorothy Lazier

Lieselotte Schlago Area of Interest Fund

Dr. Jeffrey A. Lord

Debbie and Mitch Menaged

Mitchner Family Charitable Fund

Madeleine M. Palacin — In Loving Memory of Marianna

Ann and Andrew J. Reid

Robert Terrell and Linda Jordan

Lillyan Tremaroli

U.S. Bancorp Investments

Watson and Susan Warriner

Friend’s Society $5,000 - $9,999

Anonymous (2)

Ken Amdahl

Joan and Fred Baker

Paula Block

Andrea Blodgett

Casey Burkhardt

Chatlos Foundation

Melissa and Richard Colburn

Community Foundation of the North State

Edna and Allen Coutts

Philip and Nancy Draper

Evalyn M. Bauer Foundation

Ewing-Foley Inc.

Hannah Fenelon and Jake Dern

Sarah and Grayson Fitzhugh

Jill and Tom Freeman

Julie Gabele

Yvonne Gee

Jamie Hall

Mario Barbieri Charitable Foundation

Diana Hirzel

George and Linda Kirkland

Joanne Kok and Jeremy Nightingale

Marcella Korwin

Gretchen and Paul Krugler

Thomas Little

Kristine Long

Glen, Linda and Landen Mattson

Ottawa Community Foundation

William Rowe

In Memory of Lyn Sinclair

Shorewood Cocker Rescue Inc.

Steve Slavin

Tahoe Mountain Milers Running Club

TRH Pennies from Heaven Family

Charitable Fund

Cecilia Von Beroldingen

Chris and Dan Wambach

Juliane and Robert Wolfe

Betsy Zern

**New Legacy Society Members, January 1-March 31, 2023**

Recognizing the vision of those who have included GDB in their estate plans.

Anonymous (2)

Ralph Alberstrom

Robert E. Baker

Michael A. Barnes

Gerald W. Beadle

Aiko Bevans

Susan M. Brayton

Benjamin Burgess

Joyce Cerwin

Aletta Clark

Eileen Colantuono

Lora Corcimiglia

Judy Dimos

Renee Ebner

Alexa D. Endes

Ridgway K. Foley Jr.

Clara Fuiten

Kim Griffiths

David F. Groth

John G. Heim

Debra Hunt

Carol Jaffe

Evelyn G. Jaffe

John Johnson

Rosemary Michele Karp

Jean F Kasl

Barbara I. Kaupat

Joyce Lerch

Sheila M. Light

Wayne F. Lovett

Amy Markert

Diana Mascali

Marlene McGee

Elizabeth Mary Mead

Susana V. Mendoza

Robert Miller

Ann Morse

Nancy Nersesian

Mary Patterson

Lucy Patti

Gordon Phillips

Scott Pryse

Richard Readinger

Noel J. Russell

Laurie and George Russo

Patricia Slosar

Susan R. Smith

Chris Stevens

Patrick H. Stewart

Susan H Turbin

Marilyn Webb

Perry Wong

Wanda Wright

**Three Easy Ways to Include GDB in Your Will or Trust**

* Visit guidedogs.com/plannedgiving for sample bequest language.
* Let us know that you are interested in making a gift in your will or trust.
* Send us the completed coupon below.

“My journey with GDB began when I met my friend Doris and her guide dog, Kessler. This started my love affair with the organization, which led to a charitable bequest in my will, a beneficiary designation in my 401(k), and twelve charitable gift annuities. GDB will always have a place in my heart. I am happy that my gifts will make its programs available for future generations of guide dog users.” — Cindy Compton, GDB Legacy Society member pictured with her dog, Chloe.

**You Can Make a Difference**

Send a tax-deductible donation today by mailing a gift or donating online.

* U.S.: guidedogs.com/newsgift
* Canada: gdbinternational.ca

Contact us at 800.295.4050 ext. 4160 or visit our website at guidedogs.com/waystogive to learn how you can:

* Make recurring gifts from your bank account, credit card, PayPal, IRA or DAF
* Make a stock gift
* Name GDB in your will
* Donate cryptocurrency
* Make an honor or memorial gift
* Have your employer match your gift
* Donate your vehicle (call 877.DOG.CAR1)

On occasion, GDB will share donor information with like-minded non-profit organizations to better fulfill our mission. If you do not want your information shared, please email us at donations@guidedogs.com.